




F-111

18/

33297/R



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2017 with funding from  
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b29304040>





# LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

THE COUNTESS OF ———,

ON

Indigestion,

AND

ITS CONSEQUENCES ON THE GENERAL HEALTH.

---

BY A LATE  
PHYSICIAN OF EMINENCE  
IN LONDON.

---

London:

PUBLISHED BY SHERWOOD, NEELY, AND JONES,  
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

---

1813.

*Price Two Shillings and Sixpence.*



---

J. G. BARNARD,  
41, NEW-STREET, LONDON

## PREFACE.



THE Lady to whom these Letters were originally addressed, abandoned for some time her intention of publishing them in consequence of the death of the writer. Having found the instructions they convey highly beneficial to herself and a large circle of friends, she has thought proper to authorize their publication for the benefit of those who suffer from Indigestion—a disorder which, by disturbing the general health, she is convinced will sooner or later

produce, in the constitution, the most formidable disease to which human nature is subject. She begs to observe, that her only motive for referring her readers to one shop for the medicine is, that they may procure them properly prepared.



## LETTER I.

London, July 2, 1801.

TO THE COUNTESS OF ———.

MY LADY,

**I** HAD the honour of your Ladyship's communication of the 30th ult. on the subject of your health. The symptoms your Ladyship describes, being seen through the unfavourable medium of your own feelings, do not make the same alarming impression on my mind as they do on your Ladyship's.

As I consider your Ladyship as no common patient, having had the honour of enjoying your

friendship for so many years, I shall, without reserve, declare to you candidly my opinion on the complaints you at present labour under, and on the best means of renovating your health in general. It is the opinion of a *friend*, not of a physician ; and it is directed to one for whom, you will permit me to say, I feel a warm interest, both on the score of gratitude, and every better principle of the heart, which I flatter myself actuates me on this occasion.

It has often been a matter of doubt to me, whether medicine has been of more benefit or injury to society. Man, like the rest of creation, has a limited existence, and disease is the means by which these limits are terminated. But man differs from the rest of creation in having his prospects extended beyond the limits which at present encircle his corporeal frame. He consists of two parts, intimately blended together, but at the same time capable of existing in a separate state. That immaterial part pecu-

liar to himself, forms the guide, the director, and guardian of the whole. Considering, then, disease, in this view, as the means ordered by Providence for terminating his corporeal existence, and giving a new era to his being in another shape, how far are we warranted in interposing with the will of that Power who has sent it for this purpose, and intends thus, by each attack, to sever us from our attachment to the present state of things, and to render the change easier to us at last? If this be really the intention of Providence, the interference of medicine is both ridiculous, on the one hand, and injurious on the other. It is ridiculous, because, if sent by the wise Director of all things with such an intention, no such efforts on our part can have any influence, it is clear, in counteracting the mandates of his will. It is injurious, by giving a confidence to the unhappy sufferer in a power too weak to render him any service, and withdrawing his hopes from the Bestower of all good, to secondary objects, which

can only mislead. Such is my opinion of medicine in a religious and moral view. This you will say is going too far; but, in pursuing the subject, I consider it also as equally injurious on the very principle of counteracting disease in the animal frame, without regard to an immaterial principle, or its future prospects. That "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward," is a truth universally felt; and this proceeds equally from the complex nature of his frame, and the mode of life he is destined to pursue. But still, though thus formed and thus situated, his constitution possesses within itself the powers of renovation. The attack of disease is counteracted by the efforts of the system to overcome it, and the interference of medicine is apt too often to interrupt the salutary efforts in their course, or prevent them altogether taking place. This is particularly remarked in acute diseases; and it is only in those of a chronic nature that perhaps it is proper that the aid of medicine should at all be had recourse to.

With these preliminary observations, permit me now to give you my opinion on your own ailments, or what are known under the general and vague terms of indigestion and stomach complaints. The stomach may be considered in all cases as a peculiar organ, and has been generally termed by some authors the centre of sympathy for the feelings of the whole body. It is, in fact, the harbinger of disease ; for almost no disease takes place without some affection of the stomach preceding or accompanying it. The functions of this organ are not only important as the medium of conveying nourishment and renovation to the whole frame, but it is kept also in a constant state of action, for completing that process on which the continuance of existence depends. Hence, both from its office and its powers of sympathy, which it possesses with other parts, it becomes more exposed to disease than any other portion of the body ; and this disease may consist either in a simple loss of tone of its muscular fibres, an irritability of its

nerves, a vitiated state of the digestive fluid, or a fault in its organic structure. All these causes produce each a separate affection ; which, though the symptoms may be somewhat similar, demand an opposite and peculiar treatment. Of the sympathies of the stomach, the most important is that with the head. Hence affections of the stomach often produce a diseased state of the nervous system ; and that lowness and depression which attend stomach complaints can only be referred to this source. The primary state of what are termed nervous disorders may, therefore, always be ascribed to this organ ; and the affection of the nervous system is but a secondary link in the chain. There is no species of modern disease which entails on the unhappy sufferer such exquisite misery, and which gives to the mind all the dread of death, without much danger of its taking place. Even religion is here found at times to want its consolation, and the unfortunate victim of his deranged feelings is hurried to extremes which reason cannot command. He

flies either to the Circean cup, whose deceitful draught, giving a momentary relief from its exhilarating effect, renders him soon a complete drunkard; or, misled by the false promises of the empiric, he repairs to the patent warehouse, and ruins his constitution by a wanton and excessive abuse of medicine, ill directed for his complaints. His mind wants relief; and if he avoid Scylla, in attempting this, he is sure to be ensnared by Charybdis.

The commencement of his unhappy state I shall now describe. It begins with general langour, a state of lassitude or aching in the limbs, and often with tremors. These symptoms are succeeded by shooting pains, head-ach, giddiness, and a strong disposition to sleep, even in the day-time. There is a sensation of faintness or depression, referred to the stomach, which calls for a frequent supply of nourishment; but as the craving is not seconded by a proportional activity of the digestive powers, an overcharge



soon takes place, and produces heartburn, flatulence, violent pains of the stomach, a nausea, with bilious vomitings, and looseness. Females, in these circumstances, are distressed with a pain in the left side, sometimes alternating with the pain in the stomach. This state takes away both the desire and ability of any considerable corporeal exertion, and also renders a long attention of the mind to any subject, not only difficult, but painful. The person's temper becomes irritable, fretful, and capricious. The judgement is defective and irresolute. The imagination suggests nothing but gloomy ideas, often extending to despondency. No taste remains for accustomed amusements, but every feeling—every sensation seems unpleasant. The sleep is disturbed by frightful dreams and startings; and morning returns to the patient, unrefreshed, or feeling as if bruised and fatigued. Thus tired Nature's sweet restorer loses its accustomed powers, and day only wakes upon the patient to new sufferings. Nor is this state of modern dis-



ease confined to those who live delicately, and indulge in every wish of their hearts: it extends to those also in ordinary life, who have no means of pampering themselves—to those even who gain their livelihood by the sweat of their brow.

This complaint, though at all times producing a painful and uncomfortable state, is frequently aggravated in summer by the relaxing effects of a warm atmosphere; and where the patient is unfortunately confined to one situation, where he has no opportunity of shifting the scene, and occasionally courting the western breezes, his sufferings become increased to an extreme degree. The end of this unhappy condition is the production of other disease, if no means are attempted for relief; and the hectic fever accompanying their unhappy life induces consumption, or else a paralytic affection supervenes. If medicine is to

be of any use, it is certainly in such a situation as now described. It is entirely a disease of refinement, and of that departure from the paths of nature, or mode of life which it is the original intention of Providence we should pursue. Man was intended by his organization and form for a more varied existence than other animals; but when this variety is not studied in his habits and pursuits, disease will be the unavoidable consequence; disease especially of those finer powers which are meant as the characteristic distinction from the inferior class of beings that surround him. Hence this state is more the attendant of a town than of a country life, from the effects of a more impure atmosphere, more sedentary occupations, and more vicious and relaxing pursuits. It is ever ready to occur where one unvaried track of thinking and acting is pursued. Thus, the life of regularity and uniformity is not always, contrary to medical precept, the life of health. The pulse is not intended to beat always

to the same given number, nor the fibre to be stretched to the same tone. This state, however, is the proper school for reflection : it weans us, as it were, and is perhaps wisely intended so, from too great a fondness for this transitory life ; and, if the patient possess a proper sense of his duty, will do more to convince him of the existence of a superior power, and the certainty of a future state of happiness being the end of his creation, than all the maxims of philosophy, or the eloquence of the pulpit.

Having thus offered your Ladyship a general picture of the progress and consequences of stomach complaints, in their effects on the nervous system, and their producing a diseased state of mind, which views every thing with the jaundiced eye of tedium, disgust, and despondency, I shall not go farther at present : I shall, however, prosecute the sombre picture through its different shades, beginning my next with the

first stage of the disease, when it simply assumes the character of permanent want of appetite, or, as it is termed, indigestion.

I have the honour to be,

Your Ladyship's,

&c. &c. &c.

## LETTER II.

MY LADY,

By the term *indigestion* is meant simply that state of the stomach in which it does not exercise its peculiar function with its accustomed activity and power ; and in order to understand it fully it will be proper to make your Ladyship acquainted with the manner in which physiologists have taught us the process of digestion as performed in the human body.

The stomach is in its size proportioned to the wants of the individual ; but it is in general longer in men than in women. It is composed, in its texture, of three parts—muscular, nervous, and secretory ; and it is by the continued action

of this structure that the process takes place. Thus the muscular part must possess a certain vigour and tone—the nervous a certain degree of sensibility and feeling—and the secretory a disposition fit to secrete its peculiar fluid in a proper condition, in order that the functions of the organ may be duly performed. Where any of these circumstances are deficient, indigestion will arise. The conversion of the aliment into a matter fit for the nourishment of the body, will certainly seem also, from the structure, to depend partly on muscular action and partly on the solvency of a fluid joined with a certain degree of heat. It is only, then, by an attention to this combination of circumstances, that a cure of indigestion can be attempted.

The symptoms which peculiarly mark this stage of the complaint are, with a loss of appetite, transient distensions of the stomach and bowels from flatulence—eructations—heartburn—for the most part costiveness—also squeamish-

ness; and occasionally vomiting. The continuance of this disordered state produces as a consequence, from want of nourishment, emaciation of body, and in the end general debility.

The state of the organ occasioning these symptoms has been ascribed to a loss of tone in its muscular fibres; but, from what I stated as the circumstances necessary to a healthy digestion, it is clear the want of tone in the muscular fibres alone is not sufficient to account for the numerous and varied symptoms with which this affection is attended: there is likewise a defect in the state of the nervous energy: or, in other words, there is a deranged sensation producing a depraved sympathy over the rest of the body; and to this is to be added farther a faulty secretion of the gastric fluid, the active agent or solvent in altering and freeing the organ of its contents. All these points are to be considered, in directing the treatment or applying the sources of medicine to rectify the evil.

The causes of this disease may be ascribed to all habitual and unvaried extremes either in living, thinking, or acting ; for it is a disease of continued excess of any kind. Hence it is found to follow too high living, and particularly the abuse of vinous and spirituous liquors, the warm and sedative infusion of tea, coffee, &c. &c.; and it is found also to arise under a regimen the reverse, and where poverty has been hardly able to eke out its sorry meal. It is no less the effect of deep study and the depressing passions of the mind : thus it is the attendant of grief and corroding care ; and the former is always accompanied by it, till the nervous system becomes in the end so affected that the sufferer dies of what is termed a broken heart, which is a sensation more properly referred to the stomach than to any other part. In the same manner it is produced by a sedentary life, or that indolence which forms properly a state of inaction compared with what ought to be the natural exercise of man.



It is from a consideration of the causes of the disease that your Ladyship will perceive the difficulty of attempting a cure ; for in no case can it take place without breaking in on habits long prevalent with us, and which, to use a common expression, are as it were a sort of second nature, sanctioned to us by usage, and agreeable to our taste from long repetition. This infringement also equally respects diet, occupation, and situation : regulation of diet is one of the first and leading points in every attempt at the cure of this malady from whatever cause it arises. In the impaired state of its functions, the action of the organ should be spared as much as possible ; and the diet should, both in quantity and quality, be suited to answer this purpose : it should therefore be of the light stomachic kind, and more of an animal than vegetable nature, from the tendency of the latter to an acetous fermentation, and thus increasing the vitiated state of the gastric fluid which already exists, and increases the disturbed state of the organ : it

should also be taken in a solid form, that it may convey a greater and more permanent stimulus, and thus augment its vigour and tone.

For breakfast, the most salutary and nourishing article I can recommend, which unites with its nutrimental qualities an aromatic property, is the Caracca cocoa deprived of its oily or unctuous matter by expression, by which means it is rendered more light, easy of digestion,\* and highly nourishing, and is equally proper for the comfort of the stomach as the general benefit of the habit. By the use of this nutritious and pleasing article of diet, both tea and coffee are avoided, which are always hurtful in every case of indigestion or stomach complaints.

For dinner the lighter animal foods should be

---

\* The Caracca cocoa was first prepared by my directions by Mr. Wilson, grocer, No. 39, Strand.

preferred : of quadrupeds, the young—as veal or lamb—to mutton or beef; and of fowls, the pullet and capon, to those of older growth. They should be always used roasted, with aromatics or pickles, and every means employed to make them sit easy on the stomach ; for it is during the process of digestion that most uneasiness is experienced by the patient, on account of that flatulence or extrication of a gaseous fluid which attends that process.

Supper should be always omitted by dyspeptic patients : and whether it has been formerly a practice or not, it should be discontinued so long as the complaint continues. If an evening repast of cocoa be taken three hours before bed time, supper under no circumstance can be necessary.

If restriction be then necessary with respect to food, it is still more so in respect to drink ; and a total abstinence from fermented liquors should be laid down as an indispensable rule in

the treatment of stomach complaints. Water is the beverage which of all others will agree best with the organ; and every privation should be submitted to in a disease so troublesome and obstinate as the present, on the removal of which the very enjoyment of life and its blessings depend.

If stimulus be wanting, it can be supplied by the use of mild aromatics, without the necessity for fermented liquors of any description. The prevalence of stomach complaints in this country has been chiefly since the use of these liquors became general. In their purest and most genuine state they are a stimulus the human body does not require; but now that the avarice of trade has sophisticated their qualities, and supplied the natural stimulus they impart from the process of preparing them by adulterations of a noxious quality, they may be considered as so many poisons to the human frame, from the use of which the stomach first suffers, after which

the mischief is extended to every part of the body. From this catalogue I do not exempt wine ; which is liable, in the hands of the wine-merchants, to the most dangerous adulteration of the whole.

Perhaps in no case does the crime carry its own curse more strongly with it than in errors of diet. The abuse of what Providence has intended, by its moderate use, to prove a blessing and comfort to us makes us forfeit the healthy condition of that organ on which our very enjoyment of sensual pleasure depends ; and man seems the only animal that suffers in this respect, or whose appetites carry him to such criminal lengths. It is no less wisely ordained in another general view, from the dreadful consequence which often arises from the over-indulgence in the inebriating cup, the midnight conviviality, and all its attendant voluptuousness. Does it not give origin to the most wanton and criminal

passions—to brawls and contentions—nay, even to murder itself?

The attack of this disease, then, of the stomach, is the silent monitor that is appointed to check our progress in this respect, and preserve us in the path of continence and virtue : it is to the body what conscience is to the mind, and its warnings ought to be equally respected. Nothing then shews more the hand by which we are created than this—that those causes which are the origin of crimes, and lead the mind to vice, produce also disease in the body intended as the very monitors to prevent their commission, and arrest us in the progress to criminal and sensual pursuits.

Next to diet, occupation claims an important consideration in attempting the cure. Sedatory professions, where the body is confined to one spot, and the mind broods with anxiety over

important concerns, each passing and live-long hour are sure both to induce and continue the present malady. The flippant and the gay, who on the contrary turn rapidly from one object to another, even though guilty of some error, are not often visited by this malady.

Neither is situation here less an object than either diet or occupation. The residence in a town is ever favourable to its attack, compared with the country. The impure atmosphere of the former, and the irregularity of its temperature, are the enemies of health. The clear and untainted air of the country gives vigour, life, and animation to every part of the frame. Hence the constant inhabitants of a town are ever a prey to *ennui*, low spirits, and all the train of symptoms with which stomach complaints are attended. Brought to this by experience and their own feelings, it is the practice of most of the inhabitants of the metropolis who can afford it, in summer to change their residence, by repair-

ing for a short time to a watering-place. This is highly to be commended, and certainly tends to render disease less frequent than it would otherwise be. There, "fanned by the western breeze," the citizen enjoys a truce from the vertical sun of the warm city, the dirty pavement, and the reflection of brick walls, as well as a respite from the more anxious cares of business.

Such are the causes of this disease, and such the care necessary on the part of the sufferer under it, both in regard to diet and other circumstances, to mitigate the uneasy state it occasions. But, independent of these causes, stomach complaints are often a hereditary malady, and transmitted, like many other diseases, from the parent to his offspring. Here it occurs very early in life, and requires to combat it much strictness in every point respecting what are termed, in medical language, the non-naturals—that is, both in what we eat and what we drink, our sleeping and waking, as well as in air and exercise, and



every thing that conduces to the preservation of life. The patient here is, for the duration of his existence, in some degree an invalid, and requires the patience and fortitude of the celebrated Venetian Carnaro, to live by weight and measure, in order to enjoy the real comforts of health. Fortunately, however, these are not common cases.

I have the honour to be,

Your Ladyship's

Much obliged.

July 8, 1801.



**LETTER III.**

MY LADY,

So far in my former letters I have stated to your Ladyship what is necessary for the treatment of indigestion, on the head of diet and other leading circumstances. To what length medicine will go in its cure, I am now to examine.

The situation of the disease is one favourable for the action of medicine ; and though a cure of it cannot be completed by medicine alone, yet much may be done by it, conjoined with the other means enumerated, both to mitigate its symptoms, and also to remove its cause. It has been vaguely considered by authors as consisting

merely in a loss of tone in the muscular fibres of the stomach. This is taking too contracted a view of the cause : for an increased irritability of its nerves, as well as a vitiated state of the gastric secretion, are to be also taken into account.

On this combined principle, then, are the indications of cure to be formed ; and experiments shew, in a healthy state, the nature of the gastric fluid is more of an alkaline than ascendent nature in the human subject, and that only when the organ is in a diseased state it acquires a morbid acidity. In this view, the indications presented are, to restore loss of tone, to counteract irritability, and to correct a vitiated or faulty secretion of an ascendent tendency.

The first of these objects is effected by bitters and aromatics, especially the former ; and as all vegetable bitters possess something of a narcotic quality, so the nervous irritability is counteracted by the same means. The vitiated secretion

requires its alkaline powers to be restored ; and for this purpose the mineral alkali has been generally the preparation employed, in a sub-carbonated state, or deprived as much as possible of the aërial acid.

Those principles being premised, I shall enumerate the articles which have been found useful in this disease.

The combination of chamomile, a pure vegetable bitter, with Jamaica ginger, a mild and simple aromatic, in the form of tincture, is a popular remedy, and often succeeds where the disease has not proceeded to any great length. A teaspoonful of this medicine is a dose, and may be taken in a glassful of water, twice or thrice a day, according to circumstances. But before the use of any medicine is began, it has been usual to clear the stomach of any offending contents which may increase the symptoms of the

disease, particularly viscid slime, which is apt to collect upon it, and to impede the action of any remedy employed. The best emetic for this purpose, as being the mildest, is the ipecacuanha; for it is not intended here to do more than simply evacuate the contents of the stomach: fifteen or twenty grains will, therefore, be sufficient for this effect. A repetition of emetics is here improper, as weakening the tone of the organ; though, from the symptoms of uneasiness and accumulation, patients are fond of having recourse to this expedient. Another bitter often used is the quassia; it is a pure bitter, but by some authors has been considered as of a poisonous quality, and therefore improper where its use is to be long continued.

For the purpose of stimulating the intestines, which in this disease are generally in a very indolent state, I have been in the habit of prescribing the cathartic extract combined with a small

proportion of prepared calomel,\* rouse the action of the liver, which, like the intestines, is also in a very sluggish state; but the pill which I particularly recommend to your Ladyship is sold under the name of the “Bengal Aperient Bili-ous Pills,” which I have found to operate very mildly on the intestines, and to emulge as it were the gall bladder and liver, and purge the system of bile more effectually than any medicine I am acquainted with. This composition, first recommended to my notice by a much esteemed friend, a physician of eminence in Bengal, I have also found to promote the secretion of urine, which in cases of indigestion and general debility of the body is of great importance, for from sluggishness of the kidneys, indigestion is often kept up, and dropsy and diseases of the lungs induced: two or three of these pills should be taken twice a week, and in the intermediate days a mild stomachic medicine should be employed with the

---

\* By Mr. Bacon, 150, Oxford Road.

view to strengthen the intestinal canal, to correct the secretion of the stomach, and to invigorate and promote the secretions of the whole of the digestive organs, in which I include the liver and pancreas. The Gentian and Peruvian bark combined with soda, and an aromatic generally succeed in these respects; but the effects of bitters are but temporary, and the continued use of an intense bitter, as the gentian or quassia, I am persuaded injures the stomach and shortens life. My friend, the physician in Bengal, recommends a composition of drugs in the form of pills, which he has found very serviceable in complaints of the stomach that prevail in the East Indies, and which are very similar to the cases of indigestion which occur in this country. To this remedy I have frequently had recourse, with great advantage, and in my practice it has proved highly beneficial. I regret much that I cannot send you a copy of the prescription, but as the pills are kept by Mr. Bacon, of 150, Oxford Road, under the name of "Bilious Sto-



machic Pills," you may there obtain them properly prepared until it is in my power to send the prescription of them.\*

Before concluding this subject, in order to shew the extensive sympathy of the stomach, particularly in men, with the head, and in women both with the head and womb, I may here notice that state of indigestion, or stomach

---

\* About nine months after this letter was written the physician of Bengal returned to England, and was so obliging as to favour the Lady to whom these Letters are addressed with a copy of the prescription; but not finding the pills made up from it at several chemists' shops in London, to answer so well as those she procured at Mr. Bacon, No. 150, Oxford Road, she advises those who are disposed to give them a trial to apply to that shop for them. Knowing the ingredients to be innocent, and having found the remedy to succeed in producing permanent cures after others had failed, she can confidently recommend them.

complaints, which arise from pregnancy. Here it is entirely a disease of irritability, for there is no cause applied to weaken the muscular tone of the organ; it is merely nervous sympathy, from the peculiar state of the womb, which induces it; but this affection of its nerves has a strong influence on its secretion, and accordingly the gastric juice is more disordered in this than in any other species of indigestion that occurs. This is evident by the longings, the whimsical appetite, and the other strange fancies that attend this form of the malady. This complaint, though less in the power of medicine than the other forms, is certainly cured by patience and time, for the advancement of pregnancy removes it. In the mean time, it is to be palliated; the columbo is here preferable to any other tonic, which should be combined with an opiate, to take off the morbid irritability present, as the following mixture :

Take of Infusion of Columbo six ounces ;

Tincture Cardamoms—six drachms ;

Acid Elixir of Vitriol one drachm;  
Thebaic Tincture, twenty drops.—*Mix.*

*Two table spoonfuls to be taken three times a day.*

If acidity predominate in the stomach, two drachms of the aerated natron may be substituted in lieu of the Acid Elixir of Vitriol.

This sympathy of the stomach is remarkable in many diseases, particularly in gout, asthma, and some others. The paroxysms both of gout and asthma are always preceded by a disordered state of this organ, and by the powers of digestion becoming impaired. Hence an attention to fortify the stomach, and preserve it in a healthy state, ought to be a particular consideration with all persons subject to such maladies, in order to prevent a serious attack, or ward off the constitutional disorder to which they are unhappily exposed. But in fortifying the stomach, recourse should never be had to exhilarating cordials, and particularly those denominated

specifics, from the shelves of the patent warehouses. Their basis is chiefly ardent spirits rendered still stronger by the addition of aromatics and other stimulant matters. The use of these compounds, while it gives a momentary relief and alleviation from pain, increases the malady, and merely suspends the hour of torment. The constitution soon gives way under this pernicious practice, and life and comfort are bartered for momentary enjoyment. This is particularly the fate of the female sex. The lowness and depression they feel, drives them to court relief at any expense. The cordial is resorted to, and they want fortitude ever after to give up the practice. In the moments of inebriation thus brought on, by a desire of freedom from pain, advantage is often taken by the other sex. Their morals become corrupted, their minds debased; and those finer feelings intended by nature to be the guardians of their honour, and the silent monitors of their conduct, become callous to every sensation but the enjoyment of

the unhappy practice to which they are addicted. As the wise man applies his conclusion to the heart, so I may apply the same conclusion to the stomach: “ Guard with all care the entrance to *this organ*, for from it are the issues of life and death—of good and evil.”

I have the honour to be,

My Lady,

Your sincere and faithful  
friend and servant.



## LETTER IV.

MY LADY,

ALTHOUGH I freely grant you my consent to publish the Letters I have addressed to you on the subject of your health, I must candidly tell you that I am a decided enemy to popular medicine, and this being known to my brethren who tread in the same high walks of practice as myself, you will see the propriety of suppressing the name of the Writer. The opposition of some physicians to domestic medicine has been ascribed to them as a mark of illiberality, and a want of respect to the interest of science ; but on the contrary, it proceeds from a respect for the public and the medical profession in general.

Though I am no friend to popular medicine in the extent to which it is carried, and with the views to which it is directed to exclude the regular attendance of medical men, yet I am aware that much benefit may arise to society when such writings are confined to clear simple rules with respect to diet and regimen, and when the treatment is directed by remedies of a mild and innocent nature. By such a plan prejudices will be got the better of, and the friend and the nurse will in some degree be able to discharge their offices, the one of affection and sympathy, and the other of care and attendance, with more success. But whenever popular writers advance beyond this fair and useful mark of the object to be kept in view, they may be said to be holding out false lights which can only delude, and are giving instructions which cannot be followed without danger. In every age of science like the present, mankind will be anxious to get acquainted with medicine, and latterly some works of merit have been pub-



lished, but so far and no further should be the motto of the reader. Having given my ideas of the utility of domestic medicine, I shall briefly notice the diseases which arise from indigestion, and which of course may be cured, (if no considerable local derangement of structure has taken place), by correcting the state of the digestive organs.

#### OF FLUOR ALBUS.

This is sometimes, but I believe very rarely, an inflammatory disease, when it is attended with pain in making water, and a deep yellow coloured discharge. In this case it will only be necessary to take the Aperient Bilious Pills, recommended page 31, to observe a low diet, and particularly to avoid a stimulating drink (as wine and spirit) and spices. The following lotion applied by means of a syringe will also prove beneficial.

Take of acetated zinc, half a drachm.

Rose water, twelve ounces.—*Mix.*

When fluor albus is the effect of debility or relaxation, it will be necessary to attend to the state of the stomach. After emptying the bowels by a dose of the Aperient Pills, two or three of the Bilious Stomachic Pills, pages 32 and 33, may be taken twice a day, and if the patient be of a languid constitution and pale countenance, eight drops of the muriated tincture of steel may also be taken twice a day in a little water. An astringent lotion of the decoction of galls, (made by boiling half an ounce of bruised galls, in a pint and quarter of water till reduced to a pint) may be used twice a day by means of the female syringe.

There is a species of fluor albus which may be termed a climacteric disease, occurring on the cessation of the monthly indisposition, generally at the age of forty-five, which is the conse-

quence of diseased structure in the womb. In this case injections are improper. The internal use of mercury will also be necessary, but in cases of this kind I would advise an early application to a medical man of experience.

#### OF BARRENNESS.

I am sorry that I cannot enter fully into the causes and treatment of this complaint. The cases which I have met with have been the consequences of abortion or injury sustained in miscarriages. Whatever may be the cause so far as it concerns the female, with whom it generally originates, I cannot devise any medical treatment in addition to what I have already given in my former Letter on Indigestion, to which cold bathing, particularly in the sea, if it do not alarm the mind, may prove a powerful auxiliary.

## OF HEAD-ACHE.

Application of cold water to the head, keeping up a discharge from the nostrils by the cephalic snuff, and the use of flannel socks to keep the feet warm are also necessary.

The cephalic snuff I employ is made by mixing half an ounce of the compound asarabacca powder with two ounces of rappee.

## OF SORE MOUTH.

Small ulcerations of the palate and tongue are very frequent attendants on indigestion, in which case the mouth should be rinsed out with the following lotion three times a-day.

Take of infusion of roses, eight ounces

Borax refined, one drachm.—*Mix.*

OF HYSTERIC FITS, SAINT VITUS'S DANCE,  
AND EPILEPSY.

In these cases, I am certain nothing more can be done than to attend to the state of the digestive organs. The specifics that have lately been recommended for epilepsy are unworthy of notice.

OF SCROFULA.

This is a disease of the lymphatic system, and in addition to the instructions for keeping up a healthy digestion, which is of great consequence in this disease, sea-bathing will be necessary. I am persuaded that nothing more effectually corrects the scrofulous habit than the sea air and bathing.

**OF DIABETES.**

In addition to the directions for indigestion the warm bath twice a week, and an emetic about every third day, may be employed. The alum whey should be taken as the common beverage.

**GRAVEL AND STONE.**

With the treatment for indigestion, soda water may also be employed as the common beverage.

**GOUT.**

This disease is so particularly connected with the stomach, that whatever tends to disturb that organ, will bring on a fit. The treat-

ment I have recommended for indigestion, if rigidly attended to, I have no doubt will eradicate the pre-disposition to this disease. During the fit the application of steam or warm water is safe, and will hasten its termination.

#### OF INCONTINENCE OF URINE.

In addition to the treatment of indigestion apply a stimulating plaster over the sacrum, as Emplast. calid. or a blister.

#### OF RICKETS.

In this disease it is of the first consequence to keep up good digestion. For this purpose give two table spoonfuls of the following mixture three times a day.

Take of lime water, eight ounces.

Peruvian bark, six drachms.

Infuse in a bottle for twelve hours, (frequently shaking it), then strain off the liquor, and add compound tincture of cardamoms.

The bowels should be emptied once a week, with five or ten grains of rhubarb powder, and two of prepared calomel. The cold bath is also proper, if there be no affection of the lungs.

#### OF WORMS.

For the purpose of destroying worms I have found the following composition to answer best.

Take of Scammony .....	} of each half a drachm.
Jalap .....	
Rhubarb powder ...	
Prepared calomel.....twenty grains.	

Mix well together.



To a child of three years you may give six grains of this powder two or three times a-week, and increase a grain and a half for every year to the age of fifteen.

It is of great importance in cases of worms to keep up good digestion, and for this purpose from five to ten grains of Peruvian bark may be given three times a-day in a little fresh milk.

#### OF BILIOUS COMPLAINTS.

By the term bilious, I mean a loaded state of the liver from sluggishness of that organ. Nothing can disturb the nervous system more than irritation or debility of the liver, in consequence of the sympathy that exists between the digestive organs and the brain. The Aperient Bilious Pills, noticed in page 31, will not only carry off slime and acrid matter from the stomach and intestines, but also purge the liver. The mis-

chief will return if the liver and stomach be not properly strengthened by the Stomachic Pills. A loaded state of the liver is the cause of many diseases, of which dropsy and apoplexy are the most common, from the obstruction thereby occasioned to the free circulation of the blood.

#### OF THE CESSATION OF THE MENSES.

The period at which this takes place is a very critical one, and therefore requires considerable attention. The mischief which takes place in the system arising from fulness, it will be proper to guard against costiveness, and to purge the system twice a-week by the Aperient Bilious Pills, which in this case answer exceedingly well; for in consequence of the sympathy which exists between the digestive organs and the womb, it is of great importance to remove every cause of irritation in the former. At this period a disordered stomach or liver, by keeping

up a morbid degree of irritation in the womb, is frequently followed by disease in the substance of the womb. If the subject be of a plethoric habit or of a short neck, the loss of blood from the arm may be occasionally necessary, i. e. when the blood vessels of the brain are evidently overdistended, producing giddiness, head-ache or drowsiness.

I believe I have now enumerated the diseases which are produced or aggravated by indigestion. If your Ladyship should require any further information respecting their causes or treatment, or of any other disease, I shall be happy in communicating it to you.

I have the honour to be,

Your Ladyship's,

Most obedient servant.

July 12, 1801.





